

# The Kingdom Is At Hand

Are Miracles an Abiding Quality of the Kingdom of Heaven?

**Scripture:** Matthew 10:5-15

**Sermon Series:** *Matthew*

**Topic:** Jesus, Miracles

**Matthew 10:5-15 (ESV)**

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<sup>5</sup> These twelve Jesus sent out, instructing them, "Go nowhere among the Gentiles and enter no town of the Samaritans, <sup>6</sup> but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. <sup>7</sup> And proclaim as you go, saying, 'The kingdom of heaven is at hand.' <sup>8</sup> Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse lepers, cast out demons. You received without paying; give without pay. <sup>9</sup> Acquire no gold or silver or copper for your belts, <sup>10</sup> no bag for your journey, or two tunics or sandals or a staff, for the laborer deserves his food. <sup>11</sup> And whatever town or village you enter, find out who is worthy in it and stay there until you depart. <sup>12</sup> As you enter the house, greet it. <sup>13</sup> And if the house is worthy, let your peace come upon it, but if it is not worthy, let your peace return to you. <sup>14</sup> And if anyone will not receive you or listen to your words, shake off the dust from your feet when you leave that house or town. <sup>15</sup> Truly, I say to you, it will be more bearable on the day of judgment for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah than for that town.

## Introduction

Last week we began our consideration of the second of five extended discourses of Jesus found in Matthew's gospel. We were able to consider the fact that Jesus for the first time called his disciple 'apostles,' because he sent them out on a mission to the "lost sheep of the house of Israel." We saw that there were some aspects of that mission that were temporary, such as avoiding Gentile and Samaritan regions, but we did not have time to consider what, if any, aspects of this mission were permanent and abiding. This is what we'll consider now.

Jesus sent his apostles out proclaiming, "*the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand.*" The principle question is, what does the kingdom of heaven look like? How do we know the kingdom of heaven is at hand? What characteristics identify the arrival of the kingdom of heaven?

## The Commission

Last week we began to consider the first paragraph of Matthew chapter ten, which contains a *commissioning of the Twelve* disciples, or the sending out of the Twelve 'apostles'<sup>1</sup> (10:2). Jesus *commissioned them on a mission of compassion*.

This commission was motivated by *compassion*, because Jesus "saw the crowds as they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd" (Mt 9:36). Jesus was moved deep within his heart and he responded with this commissioning of the Twelve. The compassion of Jesus sought to deliver them out of their harassment and lead them out of their helplessness.

There were four aspects of this commission, two were temporary and two are permanent. Jesus sent out the Twelve instructing them to go local, go light, go preaching a message, and go performing miracles.

### 1) Go Local (10:5-6)

The response of Jesus was to send out the Twelve on a *short-term mission trip* telling them first, to *go local*. The mission was "go local" because Jesus limited the Twelve to Jewish towns surrounding the Sea of Galilee.

**Matthew 10:5-6 (ESV)** "Go nowhere among the Gentiles and enter no town of the Samaritans, but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel."

The region of Galilee was surrounded by Gentile territory except in the south which was Samaria.<sup>2</sup>

Last week we noted this was *not a permanent command, but rather a temporary injunction*. We determined this by looking at 1) the context of the passage, 2) the context of the book, and 3) the context of where this event sits in respect to the unfolding of *redemptive history*.

The reason this is temporary is because the mission of the Messiah begins with Israel since Messiah must first fulfill God's promises to Israel, which includes Gentiles in God's redemptive plan.<sup>3</sup>

### A Correction Regarding Bathsheba

Last week, in demonstrating that Gentiles are



<sup>1</sup> Matthew 10:2; Luke 6:14.

<sup>2</sup> *ESV Study Bible*, note at verse 5.

<sup>3</sup> Genesis 12:1-3.

included in God's redemptive plan, I referenced Gentiles Rahab and Ruth in Jesus' genealogy. However, I mistakenly said that Bathsheba was a Hittite and also a Gentile. Some careful listeners among us rightly pointed out to me after the service that that was not correct.

Bathsheba was married to "Uriah the Hittite," and the Hittites were Gentiles. However she herself was not a Hittite, but was from the town of Giloh.

Bathsheba was the daughter of Ammiel (1 Chr 3:5), who is also called Eliam (2 Sam 11:2), who was one of David's thirty mighty warriors (2 Sam 23:34) and the son of Ahithophel of Giloh, who was David's trusted counselor (2 Sam 15:12; 16:23). Thus, Bathsheba was from the town of Giloh, which is located in the hill country of Judea south of Jerusalem and about half way between Hebron and Bethlehem. Thus, Bathsheba was an Israelite, not a Hittite.



## 2) Go Light (10:9-10)

Second, Jesus commanded them to *go light*.

**Matthew 10:9-10 (ESV)** <sup>9</sup> Acquire no gold or silver or copper for your belts, <sup>10</sup> no bag for your journey, or two tunics or sandals or a staff, for the laborer deserves his food.

The mission on which Jesus was sending them was urgent. "*The harvest was plentiful* [i.e. ripe, ready], *but the laborers were few*" (9:37). He is telling them they need not bother with going home, getting travel money, nor packing an overnight bag. They were simply to go with what they already had at hand. They were not to go home and get an extra tunic or extra sandals<sup>4</sup> or additional staff, but rather they were to go on this mission trip in faith that God would provide for them through the hospitality of "*worthy people they would find in whatever town or village*" (10:11) they would go. "*The laborer deserves his food*" (10:10). The one whom Jesus sent out to do his work, would be provided for by God.

## 3) Go Proclaiming a Message (10:7)

The third aspect of this mission was that they were to *go preaching a message*.

**Matthew 10:7 (ESV)** "And proclaim as you go, saying, 'The kingdom of heaven is at hand.'"

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<sup>4</sup> Jesus is not prohibiting his disciples to take any sandals or staff, but rather he is prohibiting them from taking additional sandals and staff.

Jesus commands them to '*proclaim as you go*' (i.e. preach), "*saying, 'the kingdom of heaven was at hand,'*" or "the kingdom of heaven is near."<sup>5</sup> Their mission was to carry the message that the kingdom of heaven had come near to them. The kingdom of heaven had now entered into the kingdom of mankind.

*This has been Jesus' message since the beginning of his public ministry.* These were the first words Jesus said when he began to publicly preach. After returning in fullness of the Holy Spirit after being tempted by the devil for 40 days in the wilderness, we are told,

**Matthew 4:17** (ESV) From that time Jesus began to preach, saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

Jesus is effectively saying to these Twelve, "Go preach what I have been preaching." So far in this gospel, we have found this phrase on Jesus' lips nine times.<sup>6</sup>

#### *Reminder: What is the Gospel?*

This is the gospel. It's the good news that the power of sin has been broken by Jesus. Satan has been defeated and a new and better way of living is now possible through Jesus Christ. God's presence and power has broken into the realm of mankind through Jesus in a new way. Therefore, turn from sin and to righteousness. Leave the kingdom of darkness and enter into the kingdom of light through faith in Jesus and by receiving his Holy Spirit by faith.

"The kingdom of heaven is at hand." *This is Jesus' authoritative message that he was sharing with these Twelve.* They were to go out and preach this message, which was the same message that Jesus had been preaching.

#### *4) Go Performing Miracles (10:8)*

Finally, they were to *go out performing miracles.*

**Matthew 10:8** (ESV) "Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse lepers, cast out demons."

*These miracles are the very things that defined Jesus' ministry since it began.*

**Matthew 4:23-24** (ESV) <sup>23</sup> And he went throughout all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every affliction among the people. <sup>24</sup> So his fame spread throughout all Syria, and they brought him all the sick, those afflicted with various diseases and pains, those oppressed by demons, those having seizures, and paralytics, and he healed them.

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<sup>5</sup> See ESV footnote at verse 7.

<sup>6</sup> Matthew 5:3, 10, 19, 20; 6:10, 33; 7:21; 8:11, 12.

**Matthew 8:16** (ESV) That evening they brought to him many who were oppressed by demons, and he cast out the spirits with a word and healed all who were sick.

**Matthew 9:35** (ESV) And Jesus went throughout all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every affliction.

**Matthew 10:1** (ESV) And he called to him his twelve disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal every disease and every affliction.

Jesus is effectively saying to these Twelve, "Go and do what I have been doing." These are what we would refer to as miracles. A good definition of a miracles is "a less common" work of God "in which he arouses people's awe and wonder and bears witness to himself."<sup>7</sup>

*Jesus is sharing his authority ministry with these Twelve.* They were to go out doing the same miracles that Jesus has been doing. Jesus is no longer doing this on his own or by himself. Rather he is inviting his apostles to join him. The same authority that he manifested in his ministry he is now sharing with these Twelve.

## What Abides and What Does Not?

This now brings us to a serious question, what of this commission abides and what does not? How does this affect us? What, if anything, should we do with what we read here? We have already noted that are some aspects of this commissioning that are temporary, but what, if anything, is permanent? What abides and what does not?

For help in answering this question, we can look to another commissioning at the end of Matthew's gospel, which contain the words of Jesus before he ascended into heaven.

**Matthew 28:18-20** (ESV) <sup>18</sup> And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. <sup>19</sup> Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, <sup>20</sup> teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

**Go.** Jesus' authority is permanent and abiding. He possessed the authority to send out disciples at the beginning of his ministry and clearly retained that authority to the very end.

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<sup>7</sup> Wayne A. Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Leicester, England; Grand Rapids, MI: Inter-Varsity Press; Zondervan Pub. House, 2004), 355.

**Go local.** The former command to “go local” has now been superseded by a command to go *global*. “Go... make disciples of *all nations*.” Merely “going local” with the gospel is *not* an abiding command.

**Go light.** No further travel restrictions apply here. Jesus simply says go. Take whatever you want or leave behind whatever you’d like. The command to go light is *not* abiding.

**Go preaching the message.** The command to carry the kingdom message does abide. Jesus instructs his disciples to teach the message. Thus, preaching the authoritative message of the kingdom is an abiding command.

**Go performing the miracles.** What about performing the miracles of kingdom? Does the authoritative ministry of Jesus remain? Does that abide? In this later commission, here in the final chapter of Matthew, Jesus commands his followers that when “making disciples from all nations” they were to “teach them to observe all that I have commanded.” Jesus commanded his apostles “to heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse lepers, and cast out demons” (Mt 10:8).

Is this an abiding command? Should we expect to see some of these same miracles today?

## Are Miracles a Quality of the Kingdom or Heaven, or Characteristics of Particular Messengers?

Answering this question requires us to ask, What does the kingdom of heaven look like? Are miracles permanent qualities of the kingdom of heaven or are they temporary characteristics of particular messengers? In other words, is the working of miracles a permanent manifestation of the presence of kingdom of heaven or were they a temporary manifestation of God’s power on particular messengers?

There are many in the Church who would argue that while the command to proclaim the message of the kingdom *is* an abiding command, the command to manifest miracles is not.

Those who argue against the continuation of such miracles would say that miracles were simply the characteristics of particular chosen first-century messengers (and their close associates) and therefore we should *not* expect to see such miracles today.

Others would argue that miracles are qualities of the kingdom of heaven and thus we *should* expect to occasionally see some today (i.e. wherever we would find the kingdom, we would occasionally find such miracles).

To answer the question of whether miracles are qualities of the kingdom—and thus to be expected today, or characteristics of particular messengers—and thus not to be expected

today, we must ask two questions; 1) Were these miracles limited to the apostles and their close associates? 2) Did miracles abide in the NT church?

### 1) Were These Miracles Limited to the Apostles (and their close associates)?

Was the miraculous ministry of Jesus only shared with the apostles and a few of their close associates, such as Paul, or did Jesus share this ministry with others beyond the apostles.

While it is true, the the Lord was mightily at work in the world through the apostles, including Paul, when we look at the biblical evidence, we discover that Jesus did *not* limit his miraculous ministry to the apostles and their close associates alone. He did in fact share this ministry with others who were not apostles.

1. **The Seventy-Two.** Luke tells us that in addition to the Twelve, Jesus also sent out seventy-two others with the same authoritative message and ministry (10:1-12, 17). Jesus gave these also authority to *"heal the sick"*<sup>8</sup> and *cast out demons.*<sup>9</sup> And they did exactly what Jesus sent them out to do, for they returned to Jesus with great joy, saying, *"Lord, even the demons are subject to us in your name!"* (Luke 10:17). Thus, Jesus shared his authority to miraculously minister with these seventy-two.<sup>10</sup>
2. **Stephen.** Such miracles as these, i.e. healing the sick and casting out demons, are often referred to as *signs*<sup>11</sup>, as in signs that point to the reality that God's heavenly kingdom has broken into the world and is manifesting his power. Luke reports that Stephen, who was not an apostle, but one of the first seven deacons<sup>12</sup>, was *"full of grace and power, was doing great wonders and signs among the people"* (Acts 6:8). Thus, Jesus also shared his kingdom authority with Stephen.
3. **Philip.** Philip, similarly was not an apostle, but was also one of those initial seven deacons<sup>13</sup>, and also shared this kingdom authority. Luke reports about Philip, *"And the crowds with one accord paid attention to what was being said by Philip, when they heard him and saw the signs that he did. For unclean spirits, crying out with a loud voice, came out of many who had them, and many who were paralyzed or lame were healed"* Acts 8:6-7 (ESV). Philip was given the authority to both heal and cast out demons, thus, he too, shared Christ's miraculous kingdom authority.

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<sup>8</sup> Luke 10:9.

<sup>9</sup> Luke 10:17.

<sup>10</sup> Before Jesus sent out the Seventy-Two, John found a man who was not a disciple but who "was casting out demons [Jesus'] name" and asked Jesus if he should be stopped. Jesus replied, "Do not stop him, for the one who is not against you is for you" (Luke 9:49-50).

<sup>11</sup> John 3:2; Matthew 16:1; Acts 2:2; Hebrews 2:4.

<sup>12</sup> Acts 6:5.

<sup>13</sup> Acts 6:5.

**Conclusion.** From these examples, we must conclude that Jesus did not limit the sharing of his kingdom authority with the twelve apostles and Paul alone. Rather he shared the authority of his message and his ministry with many others.

## 2) Did Miraculous Ministry Persist in the NT Church?

The second question is, Did a miraculous ministry persist throughout the New Testament church even beyond the time of the apostles and their close associates? If Jesus even in the first century did not limit his sharing of his kingdom authority to the apostles alone, then do we find evidence that he continued to share his authority with and in his New Testament churches?

1. **The early church prayed for such miraculous ministry to continue.** After being persecuted for preaching the gospel of Jesus and healing in the name of Jesus, the church in Jerusalem gathered together and prayed for such authority to continue to be displayed in the world through the mighty name of Jesus.
  - *"And now, Lord, look upon their threats and grant to your servants to continue to speak your word with all boldness, while you stretch out your hand to heal, and signs and wonders are performed through the name of your holy servant Jesus."* Acts 4:29-30 (ESV)
  - This prayer indicates that the early church—which in this case included but was not limited to the apostles<sup>14</sup>—expected and longed for God to continue manifesting the miraculous kingdom authority in the world through them.
2. **Paul taught that such miraculous ministry persisted in the church.** In his first letter to the Corinthians he listed *"gifts of healing"*<sup>15</sup> and the *"working of miracles"*<sup>16</sup> as two of the many spiritual gifts given by the one Holy Spirit who *"empowers"* and *"apportions to each person individually as he wills"* (1 Cor 12:11).
  - These spiritual gifts were not limited to the church at Corinth alone, but rather were among the gifts given by the Holy Spirit to all the churches throughout the world that comprise *"the body of Christ"* (see 1 Cor 12:27-30). Since Paul is thinking about the church as a whole and not merely the church at Corinth alone, we can conclude that Paul expected the kingdom authority of Jesus to persistently be manifested in the world.
  - Warfield quote. "B.B. Warfield, *Counterfeit Miracles* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1972; first published in 1918), notes that in the church at Corinth those who took part in the ordinary church worship service 'might often have a miraculous gift to exercise.' He says that 'there is no reason to believe that the infant congregation at Corinth was singular in this. The Apostle does not write as if he were describing a marvelous state of affairs peculiar to that church ... The hints in the rest of his letters and in the Book of Acts require us, accordingly, to look upon this beautiful picture of Christian worship as one which would

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<sup>14</sup> See Acts 4:23.

<sup>15</sup> 1 Corinthians 12:9.

<sup>16</sup> 1 Corinthians 12:10.



be true to life for any of the numerous congregations planted by the Apostles in the length and breadth of the world visited and preached to by them ... We are justified in considering it characteristic of the Apostolic churches that such miraculous gifts should be displayed in them. The exception would be, not a church with, but a church without, such gifts' (pp. 4–5)."<sup>17</sup>

3. **Paul assumed such miraculous ministry was manifested in all churches in Galatia where there were no apostles.** Paul's letter "**To the churches** (plural) in Galatia," which was written not merely to one church, but rather to many "*churches*" in the vast region of Galatia, which comprised much of the territory in central Asia Minor (modern Turkey).
  - In his letter, Paul indicates that he assumes that God was working signs and miracles among them, even though there were no apostles in any of those churches, which he and Barnabas had planted on their first missionary journey.
  - **Galatians 3:5 (ESV)** *Does he who supplies the Spirit to you and works miracles among you do so by works of the law, or by hearing with faith...?*
  - Paul is writing to a many churches in *large geographic region* and he assumes the Holy Spirit "works," written in the present tense, was presently and actively working among each of them even though there was not apostle among them, for if there had been he would not have had to write to them to correct their theological drift regarding the gospel and to rebuke the false teachers among them who were corrupting the gospel. Thus, Paul assumed that kingdom authority of Jesus was persistently being demonstrated among the NT churches of Jesus.
4. **Mark's long ending assumes the continuation of such miraculous ministry.** One final piece of evidence is that found in the gospel of Mark's long ending. In Mark 16:17 and 20 both affirm that kingdom authority will accompany any obedient disciple of Jesus who goes out into the world proclaiming the gospel.
  - "Go into all the world and proclaim the gospel to the whole creation. <sup>17</sup> And these signs will accompany those who believe: in my name they will cast out demons... <sup>18</sup> they will lay their hands on the sick, and the will recover." <sup>20</sup> And they went out and preached everywhere, while the Lord worked with them and confirmed the message by accompanying signs. (Mark 16:15, 17-18, 20).
  - There is significant doubt as to whether vs. 9-20 are to be considered as originally part of Mark's gospel. Many ancient manuscripts do not contain these verses at all and some that do contain them also include notes that point out that some older manuscripts do not. However, they were quoted as original as early as A.D. 170<sup>18</sup> and thus, there existed some tradition within the early church that Jesus had actually spoken these words. Nothing spoken here contradicts anything else in the NT and does agree with what is found elsewhere. If these verses are original, then they point to further evidence that

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<sup>17</sup> Wayne A. Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Leicester, England; Grand Rapids, MI: Inter-Varsity Press; Zondervan Pub. House, 2004), 358-9, footnote 8.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 365, footnote 21.

affirms the truth that the kingdom authority Jesus shared with his disciples was not limited to the apostles, but rather would be shared with and manifested through all obedient disciples who went throughout the world proclaiming the gospel of the heavenly kingdom in the mighty name of Jesus.



5. **James assumes the continuation of such miraculous ministry.** One final piece of evidence points to the conclusion that the miraculous kingdom authority shared by Jesus was not limited to the apostles and Paul and their close associates alone. James, the brother of the Lord, writing "*To the twelve tribes in the Dispersion,*" is understood to include Jewish believers who were scattered throughout the ancient Mediterranean world because of their persecution for the sake of the name of Jesus. James reveals that he believes that the same kingdom power and authority to heal that Jesus possessed was also to be expected among the elders of churches scattered throughout the world..
- James 5:14-15 (ESV) <sup>14</sup> Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. <sup>15</sup> And the prayer of faith will save the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven.
  - James assumes that where there are churches of Jesus led by biblical elders, there will be through them a manifestation of the power to heal and have sins forgiven. Given that James is writing to churches throughout the world, it is inconceivable that he would assume that such healing would only happen where an apostle or one of their close associates are present. Thus, James must believe that the kingdom authority Jesus shared with his disciples persists throughout all biblical, NT churches.

**Conclusion.** From these examples, we must conclude that the miraculous ministry of Jesus continued throughout the growth and expansion of NT churches. Thus, Jesus' authoritative ministry of miracles ought to be thought of as a quality of the kingdom of heaven and not merely as a characteristic of particular messengers.

### 3) Should We Expect Such Kingdom Authority Today?

If the kingdom authority and miraculous ministry of Jesus was shared by him with those beyond the twelve apostles and their close associates and such ministry was persistently manifested throughout the NT churches, then it seems that *we should expect* such kingdom authority and miraculous ministry to be manifested among Christ's churches today?

If the kingdom of heaven is characterized by such things as the "healing of the sick and casting out of demons," and so on, then should we not expect such things to be done among the churches of Jesus today, in so far as the kingdom of God is present?

If “the kingdom of heaven was at hand,” in the first century, then is it not also at hand in the twenty first century? And if the kingdom of heaven is still at hand today, then should we not see and seek the “healing of the sick and casting out of demons” today?

Based upon the evidence that we have seen thus far, the answer must be, “Yes.”

#### 4) Why Then Do We Not See More Miracles?

If miracles are to be thought of as qualities of the kingdom of heaven, then some may ask why don't we see more of them? It is easy to understand why we wouldn't see them if they were only characteristics of certain first-century messengers, but if we ought to think of miracles as attendant qualities of the kingdom of God, then should we not see more of them?

1) **Miracles are by definition rare.** Recall the definition we offered. Miracles are the “*less-common*” works of God whereby he arouses awe and wonder and bears witness to himself.” The key word here is “*less-common*.” Miracles by nature are *not* common, so we should never believe or expect that miracles ought to happen every day. Miracles by definition will always be rare. We should expect them to *rarely* happen, but we should not expect them *never* to happen.

2) **Miracles are few where faith is weak.** Consider how many times Jesus lamented to his disciples, “O you of little faith.” Once when the disciples were unable to cast out a demon, they asked him, “Why could we not cast it out?” He said to them, “Because of your little faith” (Matthew 17:19-20). Sometimes miracles do not happen because we do not have sufficient faith.

3) **Miracles are few because sometimes God does not will to do them.** While it is true that sometimes miracles do not happen because of our insufficient faith, that is not the case in all instances. Certainly if anyone had the faith to believe that God could heal it was Paul, but Paul's faith was unable to heal Epaphroditus, whom Paul said was “near death” (Phil 2:27) and neither was he able to heal Trophimus, whom Paul had to leave behind to recover from his illness (2 Tim 4:20). Paul himself suffered from his own chronic physical pain even though he was quite convinced that Jesus had the power to heal him (2 Cor 12:7-9).

4) **Miracles are few where motives are wrong.** King Herod sought to see a miracle from Jesus because he wanted to be entertained, but no miracle was shown to him (Lk 23:8). The unbelieving Pharisees requested a miracle from Jesus in order to test and entrap him, but none was shown to them (Mt 16:1-4). Where motives for miracles are wrong, none will be seen.

5) **Miracles are gifts and up to the Spirit to give.** Since “the working of miracles” and the “gift of healing” are spiritual gifts, we would only expect those to whom this gift has been given by the Spirit to have the ability to do such things. We should not expect everyone to be able to heal or work miracles, but only those to whom this gift has been given.

## Conclusion

We have seen that Jesus is on a mission to bring God's glorious and powerful kingdom into the cursed and broken kingdom of mankind. Jesus has chosen not to do that by himself. Instead, he has chosen to share his redemptive mission with those whom he called and commissioned.

He has entrusted to his disciples both a saving message and a miraculous ministry. The command to take the message to all nations is an abiding command. And since Jesus shared his miraculous ministry with some who were not among the twelve apostles or their close associates and since that miraculous ministry persisted throughout the early church, we should therefore expect to occasionally see the miraculous ministry of Jesus manifested in his church and wherever his heavenly kingdom is present.

Therefore, **pray**. Pray that the kingdom of God will come among us. Pray that the kingdom would grow and expand and deepen among us.

Therefore, **expect** His kingdom to come. If we earnestly pray for His kingdom to come, then we ought to believe it will and expect it to come. We ought also to expect His kingdom to occasionally be manifested among us in miraculous ways.

Therefore, **prepare**. Since we are praying and have been praying that God's kingdom will come among us, we must prepare our hearts. We must repent of our sins. Jesus preached, "**Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.**" Repent of your sins. Repent of the desire to build your own kingdom rather than the kingdom of God and his Son. Repent of all selfishness, pride, sensuality, and self-exaltation. Embrace humility, rather than self-assertion. God is opposed to the proud, but he gives grace to the humble. There, humble your heart before the Lord and turn away from the sin that so easily entangles you.

**Participate**. Jesus is at work among us building his kingdom. Each of us needs to figure out where we will serve him and how we will participate.

**Praise**. Lift up your voice and praise the Lord who is at work among us.

### Discussion Questions

1. What four aspects of the commission of the apostles were listed?
2. Which aspects were temporary and which were permanent?
3. Based up this text (Mt 10:5-15), what would you say the kingdom of heaven looks like? How would you describe it?

4. Do you believe that the miracles are a permanent characteristic of the kingdom of heaven on earth or that they were temporary qualities of particular, chosen messengers (i.e. the apostles and their close associates)? Explain why or why not.
5. With whom did Jesus share his miraculous ministry who was not an apostle?
6. What evidence was given to support the claim that the ministry of miracles did persist throughout the NT churches?
7. What reasons were offered for why we do not see miracles more frequently?